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SUBJECT: THE ROAD TO THE NATO SUMMIT AND BEYOND: ISSUES TO
ADDRESS

Classified By: Ambassador Kurt Volker. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C/NF) SUMMARY: During its first 70 days in office, the Administration will face a NATO-heavy calendar. Success will require the Administration to address quickly several key issues, among them: the war in Afghanistan, NATO's relationship with Russia and Europe,s East, and the search for a new Secretary General. This message introduces each of these issues as a strategic whole; septels will delve in greater detail into each one.
END SUMMARY

The NATO Calendar

12. (C/NF) The first major NATO-oriented event facting the new Administration is the Munich Security Conference on February 6-8, 2009. This will bring together virtually all of Europe's security policy elite and will be a critical opportunity for the Vice President, National Security Advisor, Special Representative Holbrooke and others to set out the Administration,s global security objectives. This will be followed in two weeks (February 18-20) by the NATO Defense Ministers' meeting in Krakow, which includes a meeting with Afghan Defense Minister Wardak and all ISAF contributors. A further two weeks later (March 5) is the NATO Foreign Ministers's meeting in Brussels, followed by the German Marshall Fund's "Brussels Forum" on March 20-22. Finally, a further two weeks later (April 3-4), NATO Heads of State and Government will meet at NATO's 60th Anniversary Summit in Strasbourg, France and Kehl, Germany. The Administration's engagement in these events will be critical for setting the tone for the next four years. Success will require the Administration to address several key issues right out of the box.

Afghanistan

12. (C/NF) While Allies remain committed to the mission, there is a growing sense that we will fail unless we articulate and implement a broad, civil-military strategy for dealing with the conflict. Forging consensus on such an approach will require close consultation with our Allies. While Allies welcome internal USG reviews of the situation, including the work of CentCom's Joint Strategic Assessment Team, it is important that we then "NATO-ize" these efforts by consulting with Allies and forging a joint assessment and commitment to a new approach. We want Allies to contribute more in Afghanistan and should urge them to do so, but to achieve more contributions, Allies need to feel that we have a winning, broad-based strategy that they took a role in

shaping.

Russia

13. (C/NF) Allies will expect early signals on where the Administration intends to take the NATO-Russia relationship in the aftermath of the war in Georgia. While Allies agreed at the December Foreign Ministerial on a measured and phased approach to NATO-Russia relations, the extent and pace of re-engagement within the NATO-Russia Council remains a contentious issue. Germany, in particular, wishes to return to "business as usual" as quickly as possible. It is in NATO's own interests to continue to engage Moscow in order to encourage Russia to play a more constructive role in European security. We need be honest, open and firm: "honest" about the problems we see inside Russia and its approach to its neighbors; "open" to a positive vision of Russia, and NATO-Russia cooperation; and "firm" in pushing back on aggressive Russian behavior, so Russia does not simply push even harder. In doing so, Allies must make clear that NATO enlargement creates a healthier, safer European security environment for all of Europe, including Russia) and that we will not accept Russia a veto over the future of its neighbors.

The East

14. (C/NF) Linked to the question of NATO's relationship with Russia is the question of NATO's involvement in "the East" (i.e. the eastern part of the Euro-Atlantic space). The

decisions taken in December successfully sidestepped the issue of the Membership Action Plan (MAP), putting Ukraine and Georgia on a long-term path to eventual membership. In an open letter to President Obama, German FM Steinmeier called for a serious Allied discussion of NATO's enlargement policy. While the German position may be the most extreme, it is undeniable that Allies are currently suffering from enlargement/MAP fatigue. In the near term, it is likely that this fatigue will have implications beyond Ukraine and Georgia. For example, there has been virtually no Allied support for Montenegro's desire to be granted MAP at the upcoming NATO Summit. Given this fatigue, Allies will need to find a common approach to managing potential aspirants expectations over the next few years while at the same time continuing to encourage them on their reform efforts. In examining NATO policy in the East, we also have to address the Article 5 concerns of new Allies such as the Baltic Republics and the need to develop an Alliance policy on the High North. Finally, Allies want to know sooner rather than later whether the new Administration will continue to support the proposed NATO Missile Defense program.

Finding A New Secretary General

The Administration will need to engage quickly on the process of finding a replacement for SecGen de Hoop Scheffer, setting forth the criteria by which candidates will be judged. The next SecGen will require strong management skills if he is to succeed in his mission of managing and transforming a large international organization. At the same time, he will also need to be a political heavy weight, someone sufficiently strong in his own right that he can be successful in his attempts to forge consensus on the issues facing the Alliance. While we should avoid being hemmed in by geography) whether a candidate comes from the East, or Canada, or West Europe) there is merit in finding a candidate who can bring with him or her the political and resource commitments of a major ally, such as Germany or the UK.

VOLKER